

Sonography Canada Statement: Sonographers and COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The Coronavirus has important implications for both patients and healthcare providers.

Diagnostic medical sonographers are an important part of Canada's healthcare team. We understand the need to maintain ongoing operations and to continue to provide Canadians with the diagnostic medical treatment they need. However, this must be done in keeping with infection prevention and control and occupational health standards in order to prevent unnecessary exposure to, and transmission of, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) during the provision of health services.

Unlike other imaging procedures (e.g. X-rays, MRIs, etc.), ultrasound examinations do not comply with Health Canada recommendations for social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. A two-meter spatial separation between the patient and the sonographer is not possible and examinations involve extended periods of exposure to the patient as most assessments require a minimum of 20 minutes to complete.

With this in mind, and in keeping with recommendations put forth by Health Canada and provincial health authorities, Sonography Canada:

1. Supports the recommendation to “**prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures now and for the coming several weeks**”, thereby potentially delaying elective and non-urgent diagnostic medical imaging examinations, where possible.
2. Supports the recommendation that **places of employment ensure access to, and the use of, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** to prevent the acquisition and transmission of a disease such as COVID-19. In addition, ultrasound examinations of positive patients or those with respiratory symptoms should be completed portably, when possible, to limit exposure of others. Please consult your place of employment's practice guidelines for PPE information and cleaning procedures.
3. Encourages members to implement the **equipment and technical standards** outlined in the Sonography Canada [*Professional Practice Guidelines and Member Policies*](#) regarding safety and high-level transducer decontamination.
4. Invites members to **consult their place of employment's pandemic or emergency plan** to confirm how ultrasound examinations are to be addressed as part of the core department functions that must be maintained during a pandemic/emergency situation.
5. Supports the **screening of patients/clients before arriving and entering healthcare facilities** to reduce the risk of acquiring and transmitting the Coronavirus during ultrasound examinations. Please consult local guidelines for both active and passive screening processes.

Supports the recommendation by Health Canada and provincial health authorities that **sick employees be encouraged to stay home**. Personnel who develop respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), those who have recently been out of country (within 14 days), and/or been in direct contact with someone with COVID-19 are typically being instructed not to report to work and to seek the necessary medical advice. Employers should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidelines and that employees are aware of these policies.

6. Supports **waiving cancellation or administrative fees** normally incurred for patients/clients who choose not to proceed with an ultrasound examination during the COVID-19 pandemic, whether or not they have been diagnosed with the Coronavirus.

To keep up to date on the recommendations made by Health Canada, provincial health authorities, and other credible organizations, and to learn more about preventing the spread of COVID-19, please access the following links:

Health Canada

- [COVID-19 Information](#)
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): For health professionals](#)
- [Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector](#)

Canada's Regional Health Authorities

- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Québec](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Yukon](#)

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Resources for Clinics and Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities: Preparing for Community Transmission of COVID-19 in the United States](#)
- [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know about Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions on Personal Protective Equipment](#)

World Health Organization

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Pandemic Information](#)

- [*Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)*](#)